



**Statement by
Senator Lincoln Chafee
In the United States Senate
In Tribute to Rhode Island Broadcasting Legend Salty Brine**

November 4, 2004

Mr. President, I want to pay tribute to a great Rhode Islander who passed away on Election Day: Walter L “Salty” Brine.

Salty Brine was a local broadcasting legend – one might even say he was the voice of Rhode Island. For half a century, he hosted the morning program on WPRO-AM. It was Salty’s voice that thrilled three generations of schoolchildren on snowy mornings with the announcement, “No school, Foster-Glocester!”

Salty’s show was the soundtrack of a Rhode Island morning. The sound of his voice conjures up the following scene: it is dark outside, a bowl of steaming oatmeal is on the kitchen table, there is a mad scramble to locate a missing mitten before the school bus arrives.

Salty would preside over the recounting of the news and the weather. His wife Mickie would call in and give a report on what birds were at the birdfeeder. We would be on the edges of our seats waiting for him to say OUR school was closed. I suppose it’s fair to say that Rhode Islanders associate Salty Brine with that singular elation aroused by a snow day. Salty was the ultimate bearer of good news.

Of course, Salty’s career encompassed much more than reading the roll call of school closures. From 1958 to 1968, he hosted a children’s television program called “Salty Brine’s Shack,” which costarred his collie Jack and ended reliably with the admonition, “Brush your teeth and say your prayers!” Having lost a leg in a train accident when he was a boy, Salty was a firm support and wonderful example for youngsters who were coping with a similar disability. Salty would demonstrate how the loss of a limb really would not set them back one bit.

Many charitable endeavors benefited from Salty’s talent, energy, and good name. He was especially involved in the Big Brothers of Rhode Island, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, and was a board member, appropriately enough, of Save the Bay. Cardi’s

Furniture – for whom he had recorded a trademark commercial -- honored Salty for his service to our community just last year.

Born in 1918, Salty's life was framed by Red Sox World Series victories. This is entirely appropriate, as Salty was an ardent and devoted fan and even had aspired to be a ball player. Just last August, on Rhode Island Day at Fenway Park, Salty Brine was given the well-deserved honor of throwing out the first pitch.

Like the Big Blue Bug and Mr. Potato head, Salty Brine with his skipper's hat was a Rhode Island icon, a one-of-a-kind and endearing institution that bound all Rhode Islanders together in a single fond experience. He was so much a part of our landscape that the legislature renamed a Narragansett state beach after him. The Salty Brine Beach endures as a permanent affirmation of our affection for our Salty.

Salty Brine was married to his first wife, Marion, known to all as Mickie, for 56 years. She died in 2000. He is survived by his wife, Roseanna, and his son Wally, who co-hosts the "Loren & Wally Morning Show" on WROR-FM in Boston.

Rhode Island will miss him.